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Spy Theory: Israel Wanted Data It Lost After Iraq Raid

By ROBERT C. TOTH, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—As American investigators on Thursday started their inquiry into the case of accused spy Jonathan J. Pollard, intelligence officials here focused on the theory that the Israeli government sanctioned the espionage to obtain U.S. reconnaissance data denied it since the 1981 bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor.

Before the reactor's destruction, such data, including satellite photographs, had been provided for two decades, sources said.

But afterward, it was understood, the Reagan Administration decided that Prime Minister Menachem Begin's government had violated the ground rules under which the information was supplied and cut off the flow of data Israel could use to mount preemptive attacks on its Arab enemies.

Now, one official said, the "best theory" in the U.S. intelligence community is that Israeli authorities broke the prohibition against spying on their American ally in hopes of again gathering reconnaissance information. Another source agreed that it was "the operative theory" in the case of Pollard, a civilian Navy counterterrorism analyst arrested on espionage charges last month.

Virtually all other intelligence of importance to Israel, including data on Soviet arms used by its enemies, has been provided almost without interruption, sources insisted. But whether Pollard provided specific information useful for preemptive strikes by Israel is unknown.

The Chicago Tribune has reported that data allegedly supplied by Pollard helped Israeli warplanes to avoid American naval radar and to pinpoint their target in a raid this fall on the Tunisian headquarters of

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat.

The bloody Oct. 1 raid more than 1,300 miles from Israel was made after the murder of three Israeli civilians in Cyprus, allegedly by a unit controlled by Arafat, and represented the only Israeli strike outside of Lebanon since 1981. More than 70 people were killed and 150 were injured, but Arafat escaped.

Pollard reportedly offered to spy for Israel in April or May, 1984, out of pro-Zionist zealotry, although he later accepted payment for the information. According to the FBI, he turned over hundreds of pages of classified military documents.

Soon after the scandal erupted, senior Israeli officials said that Pollard initially offered to obtain U.S. intelligence data on Arab armies and Soviet military hardware in the Mideast and that he was encouraged to do so by his Israeli contact.

Also, The Times has reported from Israel that Pollard was "run" by a little-known intelligence operation serving the Defense Ministry, and other reports have said that the agency believed Pollard's information would be helpful in targeting Arab terrorist locations and operations.

As outlined by sources in Washington, the Begin government breached the established limits on use of U.S. reconnaissance data by mounting the June 8, 1981, bombing raid on a nuclear plant in Baghdad that was nearing completion. Israel suspected that the Iraqis, with whom they continue to be in a state of war, intended to make atomic bombs at the plant.

The United States, among other nations, publicly condemned the strike. And in the aftermath, Ad-

ministration officials concluded that Israel had used U.S. satellite reconnaissance data to pinpoint the target.

They said this violated an understanding reached after the 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel was strongly suspected of using U.S. reconnaissance data to launch its devastatingly deep surprise attacks on Egyptian airfields, and perhaps against Jordan and Syria as well.

The late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir had complied with the restrictions on use of such information, sources said, even refusing to permit a preemptive Israeli attack against Egypt in 1973 when it became certain a few hours in advance that Cairo was about to launch the so-called Yom Kippur

War.

In contrast, Begin in 1981 ordered the strike on the Baghdad facility, and the United States retaliated by cutting off intelligence information that would permit future Israeli preemptive attacks.